

The Irish Question.

THE CASE AGAINST COERCION,

BEING

A Compilation of Arguments from Parliamentary Debates
and Speeches of Members of all Political Parties.

BY

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THE CASE AGAINST COERCION.

THE CAUSES OF IRISH DISCONTENT.

“SIR R. BULLER says : ‘ You have got a very ignorant and poor people and the law should look to them, instead of which it has only looked to the rich. That at least appears to me to be the case.’ ”—(Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, 24th March.)

“ By the Union the British Parliament placed in the hands of the Irish landlords weapons of oppression which they never possessed before the Union. I have here Mr. O’Connell, in 1846, quoting a series of statutes which very shortly after the Union were passed in favour of the landlords of Ireland and against the tenants.”—(Right Hon. Sir W. V. Harcourt, 25th March.)

THE TORY COMPLAINT OF IRELAND’S ATTACHMENT TO AMERICA.

“ It has always been the trick of bigots to make their subjects miserable at home and then to complain that they look for relief abroad.”—(Lord Macaulay, quoted by Sir W. V. Harcourt, 15th April.)

LANDLORD AND TENANT IN IRELAND.—CONTINUED OPPRESSION OF THE TENANTS.—EXCESSIVE RENTS.

“ Mr. Knipe (Member of the Cowper Commission on Irish land), says :—‘ The landlords with a few honourable exceptions have failed to meet by prompt reductions of rent the serious fall in prices, or to recognise the serious losses to their tenants, and to this may be attributed the combination, and the resistance to eviction, which has taken place, and is likely to happen.’ ”—(Sir W. V. Harcourt, 25th March.)

“Sir R. Buller is asked, ‘What is the cause of the mischief that prevails?’ and he answers without hesitation, ‘The rents are too high.’ He explains his meaning in this way :—‘I think it was the pressure of a high rent which produced the agitation and consequent intimidation as to the payment of rent.’”—(Mr. Gladstone, 24th March.)

“The stringency of the Coercion Bill was due to representations made to Lord Salisbury in private by a deputation embracing two members of that house. Their names appear in a return of rents judicially reduced. On the estate of Colonel Tottenham there were reductions from £8 to £3 15s., from £7 8s. 6d. to £3 15s., from £6 12s. to £3, from £17 17s. 6d. to £6 10s., and from £47 10s. to £20. . . . Another of the names in the returns was that of Colonel King-Harman. . . . He would give the house some further reductions which had been made: old rent £13, judicial rent £7 5s.; old rent £7 10s., judicial rent £4 4s.; old rent £18 9s., judicial rent £10; old rent £30, judicial rent £16 10s., and so on *ad infinitum*.”—(Mr. T. M. Healy, 24th March.)

“The average reduction on the new Under-Secretary’s estates was something like 38 per cent. . . . Whereas this gentleman was entitled to only 62s. on the average, he had, under the terror of eviction, got 100s. from his unfortunate tenantry.—(Mr. M. J. Kenny, 27th April.)

“Mr. M‘Murrough Kavanagh declared he should give no reductions because they were not needed. That was his evidence before the Cowper Commission. But what happened? A Land Commission came along the other day, and in the first case Mr. Kavanagh’s rent was reduced from £17 17s. to £8. . . . In the case of Michael Murphy, £14 to £7 15s., and so on. On the small holdings the reductions were worse, a rent of £2 being reduced to 12s. 6d. . . . Lord Courtown’s rents were dealt with by the same Commission, and here were some of the reductions made in the rents :—£52 to £38; £19 to £11; £67 to £31; £28 to £14 15s.; etc. Some of the reductions of rents among Lord Castletown’s tenants :—old rent £15, new rent £5; . . .

old rent £41, new rent £29 ; . . . old rent £18, new rent £12. Was that creditable to the head of the Irish Loyal and Patriotic Union ?"—(Mr. Dillon, 28th March.)

"The Commissioners (of the Cowper Commission) say that to force the tenants to sell their working stock in order to pay full rents would be fatal to their future prosperity . . . The impoverishment and ruin of Ireland by forcing the tenants to sell their stock are at this moment going on at a rapid rate."—(Right Hon. J. Morley, 22nd March.)

"The present rent payable by law by the tenants of Ireland is not a fair rent, it is an unfair rent. Every eviction in Ireland is therefore *prima facie* unjust. It is an eviction for an unfair rent. Your first object ought not to be to make it easier for the landlords to exact those rents; the first object ought to be to make those rents fair."—(Sir W. V. Harcourt, 25th March.)

WHOLESALE EVICTIONS FOR EXCESSIVE RENTS.

"Eviictions are going on at the present time at the rate of more than 400 a week, or 20,000 per annum."—(Mr. J. E. Ellis, 26th April.)

"During the last quarter, 1,042 families, containing 5,190 persons, had been evicted."—(Mr. A. Pease, 27th April.)

"Dealing with evictions in Kerry, he showed that in the quarter ending 30th June, 1886, 187 families, numbering 1,206 persons, were evicted; in the succeeding quarter, 207 families, embracing 1,274 persons, were evicted; while in the last quarter, 306 families, numbering 1,706 persons, were evicted. Since the beginning of the agitation, or rather, of the depression in agriculture which had given rise to the agitation, there had been evicted in Kerry 14,000 persons. This meant that one out of every eight or nine persons in the agricultural population of the county had been evicted."—(Mr. E. Harrington, 26th April.)

CONSEQUENT ALARMING GROWTH OF PAUPERISM.

"The Poor-law statistics of Ireland were most appalling. There were 24,000 people more in the workhouses of Ireland last

year than there were the year before, and the state of pauperism worse now than at any time during the last twenty-six years, with the exception of 1878-81, when special measures were taken. At the same time there was a vast increase in the number of persons receiving parish relief.”—(Mr. Rowntree, 22nd March.)

WHY THE LAND ACT IS INOPERATIVE TO STAY EVICTIONS.

“The Chief Secretary (Mr. A. J. Balfour), displaying an ignorance which absolutely unfitted him for the post he held, asked why the tenants did not go into the Land Courts. The obvious reason was that if they did they would be turned out of their holdings on all sides.”—(Mr. M. J. Kenny, 27th April.)

“It had been repeatedly asked, why do not tenants who are placed in such circumstances of stress go into court and get relief under the Land Act? Why, the tenants have arrears hanging round their necks, which in an enormous number of cases prevent them going into court and getting relief.”—(Mr. J. Morley, 28th April.)

READINESS OF THE TENANTS TO PAY FAIR RENTS.

“Sir R. Buller says:—‘My view of the country is this—that the majority of the tenants meant to pay their rents, and where they could pay them did pay them, but the rents have been too high. Nobody did anything for the people till the League was established. . . . I think it was the pressure of high rents which produced the agitation.’”—(Mr. J. Morley, 22nd March.)

“Twice within the last twelve months the Irish tenants, through their representatives in that House, had offered to place the fixing of fair rents in the hands of the constituted courts of that country. They offered on the Land Purchase Bill of the late Prime Minister to allow the courts of law to decide what should be the fair rent for the basis of purchase, and when the Tenants’ Relief Bill was introduced by his hon. friend the member for Cork, the tenants of Ireland expressed through their

representatives their willingness to consent to the proposal, that any effort necessary to meet the crisis which had occurred should be confided to the constituted courts of the country.”—(Mr. Sexton, 11th February.)

THE TENANTS DRIVEN TO DEFENSIVE COMBINATION. THE PLAN OF CAMPAIGN. THE PLAN OF CAMPAIGN CHECKS EVICTIONS.

“He had a list of all the estates on which the Plan of Campaign had been adopted. The number was 75, on which there were perhaps 30,000 or 40,000 families, and on these estates no evictions had taken place, except on the estate of Lord Lansdowne, so that there were hundreds of families who were still living in their homes who would have been evicted but for the wholesome coercion effected by the combinations of the tenants. The county Kerry was one of the places in which he had not operated and in which the Plan of Campaign had in no case been adopted. Yet during the last three months 300 families had been evicted.”—(Mr. Dillon, 26th April.)

THE PLAN OF CAMPAIGN, BY CHECKING EVICTIONS, CHECKS OUTRAGES.

“The number of outrages in the quarter ending 30th September last, before the adoption of the Plan of Campaign, was 306; while in the quarter ending 31st December last, after the adoption of the Plan of Campaign, that number fell to 166.”—(Mr. Tuite, 9th February.)

JUSTIFICATION OF THE PLAN OF CAMPAIGN.

“The right analogy to apply to the relative positions of landlord and tenant was the analogy derived from the relations of partners in a common business. Would it be thought fair in business that one partner should have all the profits and the other should bear all the losses? The Plan of Campaign had been adopted for the purpose of effecting an equitable division between the partners interested in Irish soil. He did not deny that it was a rough and ready measure; but it was not quite so

rough and ready as the plan of Judge Curran, or that of Capt. Plunkett, who actually made a division of profits upon a farm which he had never seen. If there was illegality in the Plan of Campaign there was equal illegality in the plan of the Chief Secretary.”—(Mr. T. P. O'Connor, 8th February.)

“A paper (was) sent to Lord Cowper by the Bishop of Elphin, and . . . was acquiesced in by four of his colleagues in the Irish hierarchy—men more able, respected, and moderate, than whom do not exist in Ireland. The Bishop says:—‘There is no combination, public or private, against paying equitable rents. . . . The present public combined action of tenants has no other object but the obtaining of equitable reductions of rent.’ The Bishop then says. . . . ‘In their minds at least the exaction of such rents is a violation of God’s law, which a just government should condemn and prevent, and the English law that enforces it is, in their eyes, utterly unjust, and to be submitted to only from sheer necessity. Therefore, were they even able to pay these excessive rents, which they are not, they will not pay them. The baton, even the bayonet, has but little terror for creatures so familiarized with sickness and death.’”—(Rt. Hon. H. Campbell-Bannerman, 31st March.)

MODERATION OF THE CONDUCT OF THE PLAN OF CAMPAIGN.

“The abatements asked for upon judicial rents varied from a minimum of 15 per cent. to a maximum of 30 per cent., and upon non-judicial rents from a minimum of 25 to a maximum of 40 per cent.”—(Mr. Sexton, 11th February.)

“The Clanrikarde estate, where 30 per cent. was all the reduction the tenants asked for. But yesterday on that estate the reductions made by the sub-commissioners amounted on an average to 35 per cent.”—(Mr. T. Harrington, 29th April.)

IS THE COERCION BILL JUSTIFIED BY THE STATE OF CRIME ?

“Ireland is practically free from crime.”—(Lord R. Churchill, 31st January.)

“There has not been the development of crime and outrage with which we were threatened: that fact in itself ought to be gratifying to us all.”—(Attorney-General for Ireland, 7th Feb.)

“The Attorney-General for Ireland. . . . made special reference to Kerry as showing the necessity for this bill. But the outrages in Kerry during the last half of 1885, when Lord Salisbury considered that there was no justification for the continuance of coercion, numbered 120, which was double the number in the corresponding period of 1886.”—(Sir L. Playfair, 14th April.)

“The noble Lord (R. Churchill) says:—‘The published returns presented to Parliament show no abnormal amount of crime.’ It is said there is an increase of crime now, but the rise in the barometer of crime compared with what it was in the previous year was much greater in 1885 as compared with 1884, than it was in 1886 compared with 1885.”—(Sir W. V. Harcourt, 15th April.)

“Let them look at some returns of agrarian outrages which the Chief Secretary had not touched. In the last six months of 1885 there were 543 cases, of which 232 were threatening letters, and four were murders: in the last six months of 1886 the number of cases was 472, of which 179 were threatening letters and three were murders; and since 1886 there had been a further decrease of offences against life.”—(Sir J. Pease, 5th April.)

“Although unfortunately crime had increased, it had not increased to such an alarming extent as would, to his mind, have justified Her Majesty’s Government in introducing so stringent a measure.”—(Col. Saunderson, 15th April.)

“On page 15 of the report of the last Judicial Statistics of Ireland, there was this pregnant passage referring to the state of crime during the last five years:—‘The improvement as regards the most serious offences (those not determined summarily) noted in the reports of the last five years, has been more than maintained, the number of offences coming under this category not amounting to 60 per cent. of the corresponding

numbers for the year ending 1881, since which year there has been an uninterrupted decline.”—(Sir L. Playfair, 14th April.)

“Taking the last thirty years, from 1855 to 1885, the reduction of crime in Ireland had been so great that the convicts in the prisons had decreased by 80 per cent.”—(Sir L. Playfair, 14th April.)

TRIAL BY JURY IN IRELAND.

“Ireland had 38 per cent. less criminal convictions than England, and 47 per cent. less than law-abiding Scotland. It might be said that the reason of that was because the juries of Ireland would not convict. . . . In Great Britain the percentage of convictions to indictments was 77, in Ireland it was 73, and not many years ago the proportion in England was only 68 per cent.”—(Sir L. Playfair, 13th April.)

IS BOYCOTTING INCREASING ?

“In October, 1885, there were partially boycotted 714, and totally boycotted 165 ; total 879. Now there are 836 cases, and they form a conclusive case for the Government to apply a change in the law. But in 1885, when there were 879 cases, they formed no ground at such a date, a month before the general election. And not only so ; Lord Salisbury grappled with the fact, and boldly propounded the view that that formed no ground for legislation, and that it could not be dealt with by legislation.”—(Mr. Gladstone, 29th March.)

WILL COERCION SUPPRESS BOYCOTTING ?

Lord Salisbury, speaking of boycotting, at Newport, on the 7th October, 1885, said :—“It grew up constantly, in spite of the action of the Crimes Act, and it grew up for this reason—that it is a crime of that character which legislation has very great difficulty in reaching. I have seen it said that the Crimes Act diminished outrages, that boycotting operated through outrage, and therefore that the Crimes Act diminished boycotting. In the first place, the fact is not true. The Crimes Act did not

diminish outrages, . . . and it certainly was not any restraint on boycotting. Boycotting does not operate through outrage. Boycotting is the act of a large majority of a community resolving to do a number of things which are themselves legal, and which are only illegal by the intention with which they are done. . . . I believe the truth about boycotting is this, that it depends upon the passing humour of the majority of the population. I do not believe that in any community it is enduring. I doubt whether in any community the law has been able to offer a complete, perfect, and satisfactory cure ; but I believe it contains its own nemesis within itself."

"I have seen it stated that the Crimes Act diminished boycotting. It is not true. I have had a return of all the outrages in September, during which the Act was not in existence, and outrages were considerably fewer than in August when the Act was in existence."—(Lord Salisbury, at Newport, 7th October, 1885.)

UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES IS COERCION JUSTIFIABLE ?

"We, as Englishmen, must remember, for the sake of our own liberties, and for the sake of the liberties of our sons and those who come after us, that the Constitution of England absolutely prohibits the imposition of exceptional restraints on liberty except in times of great disorder."—(Lord R. Churchill, at Edinburgh, 1883.)

LORD R. CHURCHILL ON COERCION.

"It comes to this, that the policy of the government in Ireland is to declare, on the one hand, by the passing of the Reform Bill, that the Irish people are perfectly capable of exercising the highest rights and privileges of citizenship, and by the proposal to renew the Crimes Act they simultaneously declare, on the other hand, that the Irish people are perfectly incapable of performing for the advantage of society the lowest and most ordinary duties of citizenship. . . . All I can say is, that if such an incoherent, such a ridiculous combination of Acts can

be called a policy, then, thank God, the Conservatives have no policy.”—(Lord R. Churchill, at Paddington, 3rd January, 1885.)

WHAT ARE LIKELY TO BE THE EFFECTS OF COERCION ?

“You have passed an Act of Parliament giving . . . supreme power to the great mass of the Irish people. To my mind the renewal of exceptional legislation against a population whom you had treated legislatively with this marked confidence would be a gross inconsistency. The only result would be to produce so intense an exasperation among the Irish people as would have caused ten times more evil, ten times more resistance to the law than your Crimes Act could possibly have availed to check.”—(Lord Salisbury, at Newport, 7th October, 1885.)

“The folly of imposing coercion,” says the Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise, “on a people among whom public crime of any magnitude is comparatively rare, is only equalled by its wickedness. It offers excuses to designing men to lead our youths into secret societies, and such societies, under the pretext of resisting the unjust oppression of coercion, will soon produce a deadly harvest of crime. Therefore, in the interests of social order, as well as because eternal interests will be jeopardized, we raise our warning voices, declaring before God and man that the authors and projectors of the proposed legislation will be responsible for the evils which will follow if they [sic!] are carried into effect.”—(Quoted by Mr. Gladstone, 18th April.)

COERCION MULTIPLIES EVICTIONS AND INCREASES CRIME.

“In the fourth quarter of 1880 the number of evicted persons was 954. In the first quarter of 1881, when coercion was on the stocks, they increased to 1,732 ; and in the second quarter, when the Coercion Bill had passed, they rose to 5,500. . . . And not only did evictions go up ; . . . but outrages, which in February, 1881, the month when the Coercion Bill was before the House, were 170, by January, 1882, when these exceptional measures were in full force, had risen to 479, and by March, to

531. Now what did that come from? It came from striking at the tenants' organization before you struck at the land system which that organization was directed against."—(Mr. Morley, 22nd March.)

"They were as anxious as any other section of the House that crime and outrage should be put down in Ireland; but their experience of every coercive measure which had been passed for that purpose showed that these measures were invariably directed against political offenders, while in many instances criminals were either allowed to go scot-free, or such unfair means were taken to obtain their conviction that, when convicted, they were made objects of popular sympathy."—(Mr. E. Harrington, 26th April.)

"We do not believe that the Irish tenants are burning to throw off the yoke of the hon. member for Cork and the National League; but you do. If I held your opinion, the very thing I would have done would have been to press on agrarian remedies and to abstain from coercion, which will have the inevitable effect—and I believe you know it in your heart of hearts—by reason of the traditions of the strongest passion in Ireland, of throwing the whole sentiment of the country against your remedial legislation, and giving new strength to what you are pleased to consider a lawless organisation."—(Mr. J. Morley, 28th April.)

"What could be more fatal than the alienation of a whole people from the law? The failure of the jury system pointed out the dangerous fact of that alienation, and the only remedy of the government was the abolition of that system. That was about as wise as if a man were to hide from view the index of a boiler pointing to danger and sit upon the safety-valve."—(Right Hon. James Stansfeld, 12th April.)

ALLEGED OBJECTS OF THE BILL.

"I stated before and I state again, that we do not rest our case upon statistics of agrarian crime in Ireland."—(Mr. Balfour, 28th March.)

“ It was not combinations they desired to crush, it was crime.”
—(Mr. Balfour, 26th April.)

“ We have offered to the other House of Parliament a measure, not without hesitation, in order to put a stop to certain combinations.”—(Lord Salisbury, 22nd April.)

“ Just as the figures have shifted, so has the account of the objects of the bill shifted.—(Mr. J. Morley, 28th April.)

“ We shall venture to test by the reception the government will give to the amendments, whether they really mean to confine the operation of the bill to crime or mean to extend it to combination. If they mean to confine it to crime why incorporate the Whiteboy Acts ?”—(Mr. J. Morley, 28th April.)

“ Of all the shams which have been put forward in this debate, the greatest is the sham that in Ireland the people are groaning under a terrorism exercised in spite of them, and that the majority are only anxious to be relieved from it.”—(Sir C. Russell, 5th April.)

THE REAL OBJECTS OF THE BILL—1. THE SUPPRESSION OF POLITICAL OPPOSITION.—WHAT IS THE “ CONSPIRACY” AIMED AT IN THE BILL ?

“ There is now an association called the National League. It is a conspiracy.”—(Right Hon. W. H. Smith, 22nd March.)

“ The provisions of the Habeas Corpus Suspension Act are child's-play in contrast with the provisions of this Bill. . . . Your prisoners under the Habeas Corpus Act were not tortured as they will be under this. Your political prisoners were not put upon a plank bed and fed upon sixteen ounces of bread and water per day, and compelled to do hard labour, as they will be under this bill. The bill will be a means by which you will be enabled to subject your political prisoners to treatment which you reserve in England for the worst criminals, and it is idle to talk about a comparison of the two measures.”—(Mr. Parnell, 18th April.)

2. THE MAINTENANCE OF HIGH RENTS.

“The Cowper Commission (on Land in Ireland) had found, not only the fall in prices and the deterioration of the soil proved, but it had also found that the average fall in the last two years, as compared with the average of the four preceding years, in the value of the agricultural capital of Ireland amounted to $18\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. And what was the conclusion of the Commission, gathered from these facts? It was the ‘necessity of a further reduction in the judicial rents, and the absolute impossibility for the tenants to pay the present rents. What the Government was asking the House to do was to deprive Ireland of her constitutional rights in order to enable the landlords to appropriate their tenants’ property.’”—(Right Hon. H. Fowler, 22nd March.)

“If two or more tenants combined to resist an unjust rent, and invited others to join them, they would become criminal conspirators. . . . As clause 5 made it illegal for any person to speak or write in favour of any such proceeding or offence, any platform speaker or newspaper writer would be at the absolute mercy of the Lord Lieutenant and of his executive instruments, the magistrates. . . . Two other clauses were the 6th and 7th, which had been termed the ‘National League clauses.’ It was laid down that the Lord Lieutenant might proclaim any dangerous association; he might proclaim it in any district, and might suppress it as an association interfering with the administration of the law, and thereupon any person who was in any way connected with it became an offender, and was liable to the punishment stated. Now this would apply to the bulk of the population of Ireland.”—(Right Hon. J. Stansfeld, 12th April.)

“This is an extension of the category of crime. This makes the bill, a bill not against crime but against combination. What is combination? Combination in Ireland is now detached from crime. It is because it is detached generally from crime that you are going to strike at it as combination. Combination is the weapon by means of which—and by means of which alone—the

Irish people in their weakness and in their poverty have been able to make head against the wealthy and the strong. . . . This is a bill evidently aimed against the people of Ireland.”—(Mr. Gladstone, 18th April.)

WHY THE GOVERNMENT WANTS TO KEEP UP RENTS.

“A witness before the Cowper Commission (on Land in Ireland) was asked whether the judicial rents were not too high. He said they were. He was then asked why they were not lowered, and he replied, ‘Because there is a Land Purchase Bill coming.’ That, then, is the secret of this Bill.”—(Sir W. V. Harcourt, 15th April.)

“When this (the Coercion) Act has been passed, there will be nothing to prevent the Irish landlords from exercising intimidation upon the tenants, who will be compelled to buy their farms upon any terms the landlords may choose to force upon them. The inevitable result must be loss to the British taxpayer. . . . The result must surely be a wholesale repudiation of their obligations, when this coercion shall have been removed, by the tenants whom the landlords will have compelled to purchase on extravagant terms.”—(Mr. Campbell-Bannerman, 31st March.)

“The Land Purchase Act will work mischievously if the question is left open between landlord and tenant. Being asked why, Mr. F. O’Sullivan answered, ‘I know cases of tenants who are in such dread of writs, by being actually evicted, that they accepted conditions of purchase which on their own admission they believed they were unable to comply with.’”—(Mr. C. Bannerman, 31st March.)

“One subject referred to the Cowper Commissioners (on Land in Ireland) was whether combinations prevented the operation of the purchase clauses of the Act of 1881, or Lord Ashbourne’s Purchase Act of 1885. What does Mr. J. G. MacCarthy say? .

. . . It means that a tenant under the threat of being turned out, whatever for, agrees to purchase on terms practically fixed by the coercive agent of landlords ; and the commissioners, when

they inquired into these cases, have constantly found that the price so fixed was a most monstrous price, which would have left the British taxpayer completely in the lurch. . . . The landlords' plan of campaign is to force the tenant to pay an unreasonable rent, with a delightful alternative of forcing him to purchase at an unreasonable price, thus exposing the British tax-payer to an unreasonable risk. You are asking for urgency to make Parliament an accomplice in that benevolent design."—(Mr. J. Morley, 8th February.)

"If it should turn out that the courts have made blunders, and that there is that impossibility in any case of paying rents, I think it is not the landlords who should bear the loss. I think this would be one of the cases for the application of the principle of purchase by the state; and that the state and not the landlords must suffer for the errors that have been made."—(Lord Salisbury, 19th August, 1886.)

HOW THE COERCION ACT WILL WORK.

"We propose, in the first place, to abolish the jury system altogether, for certain classes of crimes punishable by a certain length of imprisonment. We provide that two magistrates shall have summary jurisdiction, and a maximum power of inflicting six months' imprisonment with hard labour for the following offences:—criminal conspiracy, boycotting, rioting, offences under the Whiteboy Acts, assaulting officers of the law, taking forcible and unlawful possession, and inciting to the above offences. We do not propose to interfere with the liberty of the press. We entertain the hope that by giving the magistrates summary jurisdiction for inciting to these offences we may be able to prevent the press from being sharers in these crimes. . . . We propose that the Attorney-General for England and the Attorney-General for Ireland together may certify that a fairer trial may be had in England, and the trial will accordingly be held in England. . . . The Lord Lieutenant in Council will have power, under certain limitations, to make it an offence against this Act

to have anything to do with an association formed for the commission of crime, for carrying on operations for or by the commission of crime, for encouraging or inciting persons to commit crime ; for promoting or inciting to acts of violence or intimidation ; or for interfering with the administration of the law, or disturbing the maintenance of law and order. . . . We do not propose that the measure shall be limited in point of time.” —(Mr. Balfour, 28th March.)

“ And now we come to the most serious clause of all—one for which I know no parallel—I mean the power which is given to the Lord Lieutenant to create a new class of crime. For, as I read the bill, it gives to the Lord Lieutenant power to deal with the case of dangerous associations. . . . But where do you find a constitutional precedent of justification for giving to the Lord Lieutenant the power to determine whether an association is or is not a dangerous association.”—(Sir C. Russell, 5th April.)

“ You may leave out of the bill everything relating to crimes that are known ; and yet it will continue to retain the bulk and pith and heart which makes us most oppose it—that is, the creation of new crimes.”—(Mr. Gladstone, 18th April.)

“ The 5th sub-section of clause 1 mentioned the offences to which the clause applied :—‘ Any felony and misdemeanour, and any offence punishable under this Act.’ This language was clear in favour of the conclusion which had been maintained, that this Act created a new category of crimes. This clause applied to new offences created for the first time, and made punishable for the first time.”—(Mr. Asquith, 29th April.)

“ I say with deliberation, that this bill interferes to a larger extent than any bill that ever preceded it with the constitutional rights and liberty of the Irish people.”—(Sir C. Russell, 25th April.)

“ This measure consigns the popular leader who advises the tenant who asks for a reduction of rent, as well as the tenant who asks for a reduction, to the tender mercies of one of those stipen-

diary magistrates. . . . They are magistrates who are inexperienced in law, without legal education, many of them retired officers in the army. . . . The journalist who criticises the action of the government, or protests against landlord oppression will meet the same fate. In fact, there is no loop-hole of escape for any political movement in Ireland if this bill passes. Ireland will have no place for speaking in if this bill passes. .

. . . It would be preposterous folly for any politician to cope with the powers which the bill gives to the government. . . . They will have to leave the field to others.—(Mr. Parnell, 1st April.)

“What are we to say with regard to the proposal to place under the jurisdiction of two resident magistrates the power of imposing six months’ hard labour for posting, circulating, or forwarding in any way any document which directs or requires any person to do or refrain from doing any act? That is one of the provisions under which two resident magistrates are to be empowered to inflict six months’ hard labour. . . . As to the right of public meeting, I believe it is to be virtually suppressed by the bill. It is to be an offence to meet in any way to the terror of Her Majesty’s subjects. And who is to judge of the terror? Two resident magistrates.”—(Mr. Gladstone, 18th April.)

“The press would be at the mercy of the government. Even in Russia a newspaper would have three warnings before it was suppressed.”—(Mr. Labouchere, 31st March.)

“The bill also provided that minor offences were to be tried by two resident magistrates, the punishment accorded being six months’ hard labour. What were those minor offences? They were specified in the Whiteboy Acts, and included among them assemblies carrying unusual badges.”—(Mr. Labouchere, 31st March.)

“The Acts also dealt with such an offence as persons by drums and music promoting an unlawful meeting.”—(Mr. Labouchere, 31st March.)

THE GOVERNMENT'S REMEDIAL MEASURE.—1. PROMISE.

“Our Irish policy is not confined to the alteration in criminal proceedings. We expect every day the report on Lord Cowper’s Commission on Land Tenure and Land Purchase in Ireland. . . . As soon as ever we receive that report we shall not lose a day in considering it, and in submitting to the House any recommendations which the Commissioners may make, or any other proposals which we may think it right that the House should adopt. . . . We believe that there are matters in the Irish land laws which require amendment, . . . and those, no doubt, will be dealt with in the report of the Commission, and in the bill we propose to introduce.”—(Sir M. Hicks-Beach, 11th February.)

2. PERFORMANCE.

“On that Commission were appointed one English landlord, who was connected with the coercive administration of the country; two Irish landlords; one English statistician, who might be supposed to be impartial; and one Irish farmer, who it had been carefully ascertained before he was appointed, had voted Tory at the last election against a Nationalist. Not a single representative of the mass of the people was placed on the Commission.”—(Mr. Dillon, 28th March.)

“The Commission has been invested by you with express authority, and it has made one recommendation which overshadows and absorbs all the rest—the necessity, owing to the change of circumstances which has occurred, of reopening the judicial rent fixed under the fifteen years’ contract. That is their chief recommendation.”—(Mr. Gladstone, 24th March.)

“Are you going to revise the rents as the Royal Commission has recommended you to do? Not at all. You are going to keep up the rents and make the tenant insolvent. But what the Irish people want is to have reasonable rents and to be solvent.”—(Sir W. V. Harcourt, 15th April.)

“The Cowper Commission have recommended that rents should be reduced. But the government are not going to reduce those rents. They are going to continue them, and they are going to better the position of the unhappy tenants by means of a Bankruptcy Bill. . . . In the opinion of the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Chamberlain) the best cure for all the ills of Ireland is to enable the oppressed tenant, who is unable to pay his exorbitant rent, to become a bankrupt.”—(Sir W. V. Harcourt, 25th March.)

“By giving County Court Judges jurisdiction (in bankruptcy) in every county we have . . . brought the Court of Bankruptcy within the reach of tenants all over Ireland.”—(Earl of Cadogan, 31st March.)

“The tenant before he got his rent reduced, should be compelled to submit to the penalty of being made a bankrupt. (Hear, hear).”—(Earl of Dunraven, in House of Lords, 21st April.)

“I do not contend that the bankruptcy clauses will be received with widespread enthusiasm.”—(Lord Ashbourne, 21st April.)

“He maintained that some relief ought really to be given to the tenants. . . . The tenants whom they were most anxious to help, the tenants who had done their best to meet their obligations, . . . would have no help at all, although they were the men they wanted to help.”—(Earl Cowper, 31st March.)

“The honest and thrifty tenant can only get relief by refusing to pay his rent for a year, and then going through the process of bankruptcy.”—(Earl Spencer, 21st April.)

“He was commissioned to say that the Presbyterian farmers of the North of Ireland entirely objected to, and repudiated the bill.”—(Duke of Abercorn, 22nd April.)

THE SORT OF COERCION WANTED.

“What does Sir R. Buller say? ‘What we want is a court that would have a certain amount of coercive power over a bad tenant, and a very strong coercive power over a bad landlord.’

. . . But what are you doing? On your own showing you are proposing to introduce a bill for exercising a certain power against bad tenants, but a strong coercive power against the bad landlords does not enter into your views.”—(Mr. Gladstone, 24th March.)

“Lord Dufferin, speaking of the landlords of Ireland in the House of Lords, ‘There are those possessing property in Ireland, in whose honour, sense of justice, and patriotism I have no confidence whatever.’”—(Mr. J. E. Ellis, 26th April.)

RIGHT OF COMBINATION CONCEDED IN ENGLAND, AND SUPPRESSED IN IRELAND.

“I will illustrate my meaning by an instance from my own experience in early life. At that time Trades’ Unions were practically illegal; the law of conspiracy had been so strained by judges, that almost every combination of the labouring class was criminal, and very cruel and unjust sentences were passed. I was associated with my right hon. and learned friend in obtaining an alteration of that law. But what would have been the attitude of my hon. friend if any government had introduced a bill more effectually to suppress trades’ unionism? We took a contrary course: we first addressed ourselves to altering the unjust law.”—(Sir W. V. Harcourt, 25th March.)

“Speaking in the year 1867, in the very height of the Fenian insurrection, . . . the senior member for Birmingham (Mr. John Bright) said this:—‘I entirely disagree with those who, when any crisis or trouble arise in Ireland, say you must first of all preserve order, you must put down all disloyalty and disobedience to law, and assert the supremacy of government, and then consider the grievances complained of. This has been the case in Ireland for a number of years, and the great preserver has been the gallows and the gibbet.’ That was Birmingham doctrine in those days.”—(Sir W. V. Harcourt, 25th March.)

ONE LAW FOR ENGLAND ANOTHER FOR IRELAND.

“If the bill would do no harm to law-abiding persons, why

was it not made applicable to the whole of the United Kingdom?"—(Mr. Redmond, 12th April.)

"The Unionist platform which Unionists went in for was equal laws and liberties for the United Kingdom. But now the first thing they were asked to do was to make the laws unequal, and to abridge the liberties of Irishmen. He, at all events, would not be false to what was said in the Unionist campaign."—(Mr. Winterbotham, 29th March.)

"You have to force this question, whether it is your intention to unite Parliament deliberately and systematically under a representative system and in a free country, to govern Ireland in defiance of the sentiments of the vast majority of those whom she sends to represent her."—(Mr. Gladstone, 24th March.)

WHO HAVE ASKED FOR THE COERCION BILL?

"For whom, and at whose instigations has this bill been introduced?—the very last body of men whose views ought to be favourably considered by any government which desired to do justice, who have been responsible for the unjust and cruel evictions during the last fifty years, of more than four millions of the Irish people, whose inhuman deeds have produced terrible crimes, who have broken countless hearts, who have filled many a street in English and American cities with the once virtuous daughters of Irish peasants."—(Mr. Clancy, 14th April.)

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